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ABSTRACT

Organizational identification (OID) is defined as a psychological climate variable reflecting positive perceptions of the organization. The prediction of OID, using measures of interpersonal facets of work, was examined for contingencies due to interactions between organizational context/structure and worker self-esteem. It was hypothesized and found (using subgrouping moderator analyses) that, in an organization with routine technology and interdependent task structure, high (but not low) self-esteem workers (N=205) positively related interpersonal facets of work with OID. In a contrasting organization, however, the opposite moderator effect was predicted and found: interpersonal facets were positively correlated with OID for low (but not high) self-esteem workers (N=126). (Author)

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PREDICTING ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION:

AN INTERACTIONAL CONTINGENCIES APPROACH

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Predicting Organizational Identification: An Interactional Contingencies Approach

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Organizational identification is the fundamental psychological component in the process whereby individuals commit themselves to an organization (Gent, 1978). This study defines organizational identification (OID) as a cognitive/perceptual variable which reflects the degree to which an individual has a favorable impression of the organization, and regards his or her well-being, need fulfillment, and self image to be bound up with membership in the organization.

As a cognitive variable, OID falls within the larger conceptual framework of psychological climate and shares the assumptions underlying the psychological climate construct (James & Jones, 1974; James, Hater, Gent, & Bruni, 1978). Two basic assumptions salient to this paper are that OID (as a psychological climate variable) a) is a function of situational attributes with direct ties to individual experience in the work environment and b) is a function of person characteristics such as beliefs, needs, and personality traits.

A number of situational and person variables have been directly linked with OID in past research, and among the most important were measures of interpersonal facets of the work. For instance, OID was significantly related to situational measures of interpersonal facets such as workgroup cooperation and friendliness (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972), cohesiveness (Marsh & Mannari, 1977), task interdependence and resource adequacy (Patchen, 1970). Individual difference measures such as social involvement in one's workgroup (Sheldon, 1971) and need for affiliation (Brown, 1969) have also been significant predictors of OID.

There is, however, a third and most important assumption for OID based on psychological climate theory: OID is a product of cognitive constructions which involve person by situation interactions (James & Jones, 1974; James et al., 1978). That is, perceptions of organizational favorableness are based in part on a person by situation interaction in which situational attributes are cognitively evaluated by an individual in terms of his or her needs, expectancies, personality traits, etc. (Gent, 1978). Brown (1969) made a similar point: "Identification depends on satisfactions and anticipated goal achievement derived from activities which are membership-bound, ego-involving, and intrinsically motivating. Work provides opportunities for the satisfaction of a wide variety of needs . . .. (p. 347)" This last psychological climate assumption provides the rationale for the present research. For, in this paper we intend to show that organizational context/structure and worker characteristics complexly interact to moderate the relationship between interpersonal facets of work and OID.

Specifically, the following hypotheses will be tested:

1. In an organizational context of routine technology with a highly interdependent task structure, interpersonal facets of the work (workgroup cooperation/communication, workgroup personnel resources, worker orientation toward others) will be significantly and positively associated with OID by individuals with high self-esteem, and weakly associated with OID --if at all--by low self-esteem individuals.

2. In an organizational context of non-routine technology with a relatively autonomous task structure, high self-esteem individuals will not relate these same interpersonal facets with OID, whereas for low self-esteem individuals these facets will be associated with OID.

Figure 1 models Hypotheses 1 and 2 in diagramatic form. As presented in Figure 1, the organizational context/structure contingency of the hypotheses relies on the function of interpersonal facets of the work under the two conditions. In an organization employing routine technology with high task interdependence (and thus high division of labor), interpersonal facets of the work are inseparable from task accomplishment. In a non-routine technology organization with task autonomy, interpersonal facets are to a great extent independent of task accomplishment.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Self-esteem was chosen as a moderator since it appears to tap an important personality characteristic underlying worker perceptions of the organization. Self-esteem is construed as an attitude toward the self, located on a favorable-to-unfavorable dimension (Crandall, 1973; Rosenberg, 1965). High self-esteem individuals are depicted as having general respect for themselves and, more particualarly, confidence in their own abilities (Korman, 1967). They might be expected, therefore, to associate interpersonal facets with OID when they are functional for task accomplishment, and not to relate those facets with OID when they are independent of task accomplishment. Low self-esteem individuals reflect self-denegration, unmet dependency needs, and heightened susceptibility to social influence (Hunt, Singer, & Cobb, 1967; Stotland & Hillmer, 1962). For them it is unlikely that task-related interpersonal facets would be associated with OID. In the task-autonomous organization, however, low self-esteem individuals could be expected to relate interpersonal facets to OID, since in this setting interpersonal

facets might be instrumental for fulfilling dependency or affiliative needs.

Method[1]

This study uses data collected as part of a larger research project which was designed to explore the effects of work setting and individual-difference variables on psychological climate.

Samples

In order to examine the organizational context/structure contingency on the interpersonal facet - OID relationship, an extreme group approach was adopted. Samples were chosen from two organizations which represented polar contrasts in technology:

1. Low-level technology sample (Production Line): four small paper-products manufacturing plants, all of which performed essentially the same functions, and belonged to the same parent company. The assembly-line technology adopted by these plants could be characterized as very routine with maximum task interdependence.

2. High-level technology sample (Information Systems): a computer programming, systems design, software servicing department of a large pre-paid health insurance program (HMO) on the West Coast of the United States. The technology observed in this department was non-routine and to a great extent tasks were accomplished autonomously with individuals working independently of one another.

Table 1 provides documentation of the organizational contrasts between the low technology sample (production line) and the high technology sample (information systems). The variables in Table 1, as well as all situational measures used in this study, focus on the workgroup and job levels of the organization. Of particular interest are the values

[1]For a more detailed description of this study's samples, subjects, measures, and procedures, see Gent (1978).

for division of labor and routineness of jobs, for which sample differences account for 54% and 21% of the variance respectively. It appears that these two samples are well suited to test the hypothesized effects of organizational context/structure on the interpersonal facet - OID relationship.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Subjects in the production line sample were 205 employees for 23 operations and materials-handling workgroups. Job types included machine operators, packers, lift-truck operators, etc.

Subjects in the information systems sample were 126 employees from 21 programming, systems analysis, software services, and program documentation workgroups. In both samples each workgroup had its own supervisor.

Measures

Two separate questionnaires, one for employees and one for supervisors, were constructed. In the employee questionnaire, item composites were developed to measure a number of person variables including all those under consideration in this study. The supervisor questionnaire was designed to investigate various aspects of the work situation including context and structure at the workgroup and job levels (see James & Jones, 1974; 1976). This approach provided independent ratings of situational conditions, thus eliminating the problem of method variance in the situational prediction of OID. Most items in both questionnaires were written with five Likert-type response categories.

The three measures acquired from the employee questionnaire for

this study are as follows:

Organizational Identification (OID). An OID scale was constructed of nine items selected from the "identification" and "opportunities for growth and development" composites of the James and Jones climate instrument (James, Hartman, Stebbins, & Jones, 1977; Jones, James, & Bruni, 1975; Jones, James, Bruni, & Sells, 1977; Jones & James, 1979). Estimates of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the OID scale were .81 in the production line sample and .87 in the information systems sample.

Self-esteem. The measure of self-esteem developed for this study concentrated on manifestations of self-esteem in the work place. Thus, a number of items contained a "successful performance" component. An 11-item scale was adopted which combined elements from two established self-esteem instruments (5 items) (Hunt et al., 1967; Rosenberg, 1965), a self-rated ability measure (4 items) (Dieterly & Schneider, 1974), and an internal control scale (2 items) (Levinson, 1974). The scale's coefficient alpha in the production line sample was .65, in the information systems sample, .66.

Worker Orientation toward Others (other orientation). This construct was measured using a composite derived from factoring a number of need for affiliation, need for independence and autonomy, and powerful other (I-E) items (Fries & Knox, 1972; Levinson, 1974; Steers & Braunstein, 1976; Vroom, 1960). The eight-item scale which evolved from this procedure reflects a personality characteristic approximating Horney's (1945) "movement toward others." In the production line sample, alpha was .54; in the information systems sample, it was .66.

Two measures used in this study were from the supervisor survey:

Workgroup Personnel Resources consisted of an item which asks to what extent employees in the workgroup have received adequate training for their jobs.

Workgroup Cooperation/Communication consisted of an item evaluating how good cooperation and communication are among workgroup members.

Results

In order to test the hypotheses that interpersonal facets of the work would be differentially related to OID depending on the interactions between organizational context/structure and workers' level of self-esteem, data were analyzed using a moderated subgrouping approach. Groups were split at a value equal to the average of the mean scores for the production line and information systems samples on self-esteem. This enabled cross-sample comparisons to be made since low and high subgroups in both samples connoted similar levels of the moderator.

Table 2 presents standard deviations for OID and the three interpersonal facet predictors in the two total samples as well as in the subgroups moderated on self-esteem. Ns for the various groups are also shown. It can be seen that there are no appreciable restriction of range effects, even though self-esteem was significantly correlated with OID in the production line sample and with other orientation in both samples.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Table 3 presents zero-order correlations between interpersonal facets and OID in high and low self-esteem subgroups for both samples. Although

the tabled r values represent accurately differences in relationships from subgroup to subgroup, significance tests for the difference between coefficients from different subgroups were based on the unstandardized slope coefficients or b-weights. This procedure has been recommended when a comparison of relationships between two variables is being made across different samples (cf. Cronbach, 1975; Duncan, 1975; Namboodiri, Carter, & Blalock, 1975). The actual test statistic can be found in McNemar (1962, p. 143). The significance values for the differences are based on two-tailed t-tests even though hypotheses were directional.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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In general, the results supported the hypotheses. First, it was predicted that high self-esteem workers in Production Line would relate interpersonal facets of the work with OID, and that low self-esteem workers would not. This prediction was supported most emphatically by the workgroup personnel resources predictor and less so by the other two interpersonal facets. The workgroup cooperation/communication - OID correlation was barely significant for high self-esteems, whereas worker orientation toward others was a significant predictor in the low self-esteem subgroup. Second, the opposite relationships were predicted to hold in Information Systems subgroups. That is, low self-esteem, and not high self-esteem, workers were expected to associate interpersonal facets with OID. With the exception of workgroup personnel resources, this prediction was supported.

It should be further noted that three between-sample differences

in coefficients from corresponding subgroups were significant at the .05 level. They were the correlation with OID of (a) workgroup personnel resources in high self-esteem subgroups (.44 vs. .06), (b) workgroup cooperation/communication in low self-esteem subgroups (-.04 vs. .49), and (c) worker orientation toward others in high self-esteem subgroups (.46 vs. .08). These findings further support the contention that person by situation interactions moderate the effects of interpersonal facets of work on OID.

Conclusion

This paper proposed to show that organizational context/structure and worker characteristics interact to moderate the relationship between interpersonal facets of work and OID. The research results presented tend to do just that.

The intent of the study was not to elaborate a complete model of OID that would be widely generalizable to a variety of organizational settings--far from it! Two, somewhat unique organizational samples were chosen along with a few well-known predictors of OID. To these basic elements of the study was added one conceptually important individual-difference moderator (self-esteem). Relationships among these variables were then examined in terms of the interactionist assumption for psychological climate variables.

Many other situational attributes and personal characteristics are known predictors of OID. Additional research is needed to unravel some of the complex interactions underlying their effects on favorable perceptions of the organization. We stated at the beginning of this paper that OID is the fundamental psychological component in the

organizational commitment process. Increased commitment is a common goal of organizational development efforts. The results of this study suggest that in seeking to achieve such a goal, it is well to remember that similar events or conditions at work may well lead to different perceptions of organizational favorableness (OID). Furthermore, these differences are contingent upon interactions among attributes of the organization and personal characteristics of its workers.

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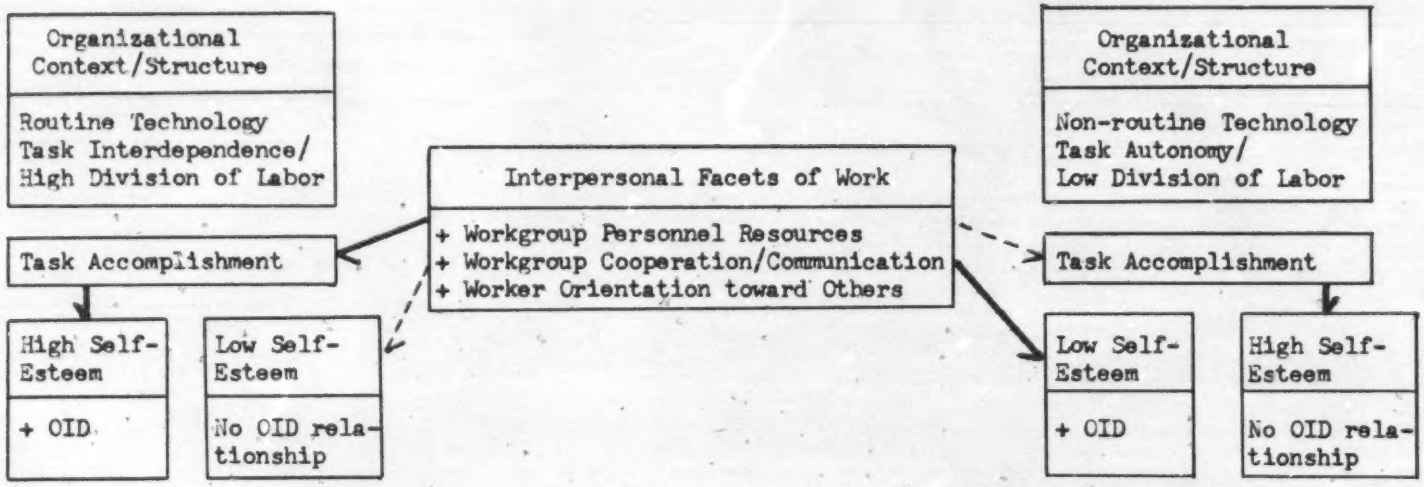

Figure 1. Hypothesized relationships between interpersonal facets of work and OID.

Table 1

Mean Differences in Selected Situational Measures between

Production Line and Information Systems Samples

Situational Measure	Production Line		Information Systems		Omega Squared
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Workgroup Size[a]	11.61	4.92	7.42	4.15	.18**
Division of Labor[a]	4.78	1.57	1.89	1.05	.54**
Standardization of Personnel Procedures[a]	2.44	.60	1.76	.55	.26**
Intensity of Control & Discipline Procedures[a]	2.10	.50	1.73	.37	.16**
Routineness of Jobs[b]	4.04	1.00	2.90	.92	.21**

[a]N for Production Line = 23 workgroups; N for Information Systems = 21 workgroups.

[b]N for Production Line = 91 jobs rated; N for Information Systems = 30 jobs rated.

**$p < .01$ for univariate F-test.

TABLE 2

Standard Deviations of OID and Interpersonal Facets of Work in the Total Production Line and Information Systems Samples and in Subgroups Moderated by Self-Esteem

Variables	Production Line			Information Systems		
	Total	Low	High	Total	Low	High
n in group	205	137	68	126	51	75
Organizational Identification (OID)	6.32	6.30	6.30	6.12	5.69	6.41
Workgroup Personnel Resources	.87	.83	.94	.83	.76	.87
Workgroup Cooperation/Communication	.89	.87	.92	1.09	.89	1.21
Worker Orientation toward Others	4.78	4.94	4.11	3.48	3.37	3.46

TABLE 3

Interpersonal Facet Prediction of OID Moderated by Self-Esteem

Predictors	Production Line			Information Systems		
	Self-Esteem		Significance	Self-Esteem		Significance
	Low	High	of t-test	Low	High	of t-test
Workgroup Personnel Resources	.06	.44***	$p < .05$	-.03	.06	ns
Workgroup Cooperation/Communication	-.04	.21*	$p < .10$	.49***	.04	$p < .05$
Worker Orientation toward Others	.26**	.46***	$p < .10$	.42***	.08	$p < .10$

*$p < .10$

**$p < .05$

***$p < .01$